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### Items of Interest:

**VA Announces 100 New Patient Advocates for Wounded.** Continuing the strong support of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in meeting the needs of returning combat veterans, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson announced the Department is immediately hiring 100 new patient advocates to help severely injured veterans and their families navigate VA's systems for health care and financial benefits. The VA secretary said the 100 new patient advocates will be veterans of the combat theaters in Iraq or Afghanistan. Their job will be to ensure a smooth transition for wounded service members to VA health care facilities throughout the nation, while also cutting through red tape for other benefits. For more information, visit [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov).

# Navy and Marine Corps Medical News

*A Public Affairs Publication of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery*

## President Announces Comfort Deployment to Latin America

**By Mass Communication Specialist  
1st Class Michael D. Wimbish, U.S.  
Southern Command Public Affairs**

**WASHINGTON** - President Bush announced March 5 the deployment of the hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) to Latin America for a series of humanitarian relief missions.

Bush said he is sending Comfort to 13 South and Central American countries beginning in June, adding that the deployment is going to be busy.

"Altogether, the Comfort's doctors and nurses and health care professionals expect to treat 85,000 patients and conduct up to 15,000 surgeries," Bush said. "At the same time, military medical teams will be operating inland to help bring treatment and care to other communi-

ties. These teams do everything from vaccinating people against disease to building new medical clinics."

The Comfort announcement came during a speech in Washington, discussing the partnership between the U.S. and the region prior to the president's upcoming trip to five nations there later this week. Bush spoke about current and proposed joint efforts to face political, economic and educational challenges -- including U.S. military humanitarian efforts.

U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) and U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command are planning and coordinating the mid-summer deployment with the partner nations Comfort will visit. The

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**ARABIAN SEA** - Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Benjamin Morgan stitches a laceration on the hand of Aviation Boatswain's Mate Airman Apprentice Janssen Eilenberger in the medical ward aboard USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74) March 2. *U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Paul J. Perkins*

## Navy Medicine Welcomes Lean Six Sigma Onboard

By Jacky Fisher, Naval Medical Center Portsmouth Public Affairs Office

**NAVAL MEDICAL CENTER PORTSMOUTH, Va.** - Ten medical support personnel, nine active duty and one civilian, converged here for a week of training in the Navy Medicine's newest tool to improve business practices and streamline efficiency in existing healthcare processes.

New to the Navy but not to the civilian sector, Lean Six Sigma (LSS) is the newest hybrid business philosophy designed to assist businesses across the board to run more efficiently and to do so by being customer-centric. The Navy has recently adopted Lean Six Sigma in order to focus on improvements in customer satisfaction. But this is just the beginning.

Dynamic and proactive in nature, Lean Six Sigma is a continuous process flow of data evaluation

resulting in the elimination of waste and non-value added extra activity. *Lean* focuses on the elimination of waste; *Six Sigma* is the avenue to eliminate the defects associated with the waste by interpreting data using a statistical methodology.

"The cornerstone of the continuous improvement effort is the implementation of industry proven Lean Six Sigma methodologies in day-to-day operations," explains Donald C. Winter, Secretary of the Navy.

Lean Six Sigma has been used widely by such corporations as Toyota, Motorola and Home Depot. The master trainers of the student group, DeAndre Lyman and Frances Kanach are known as Black Belts and they take the basic principles of Lean Six Sigma and mold them to the needs of a company looking for a better way to do business. In the case of Naval Medicine, Lean Six



Lean Six Sigma Class Photo provided by Naval Medical Center Portsmouth Public Affairs Office.

Sigma was retooled to fit a service provider oriented organization, with the first priority of providing health care to the war fighter.

Lyman clarifies the purpose of Lean Six Sigma in terms of what it

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## MEDCAP Launches From Bataan ESG

By Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class (SW) Brian Anderson, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/Commander, U.S. 5th Fleet Public Affairs

**BATAAN ESG, At Sea** - Forty-eight service members from Fleet Surgical Team (FST) 6 and Bataan Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) departed USS Bataan (LHD 5) and arrived aboard USS Shreveport (LPD 12) on March 1 to train and prepare for a scheduled Medical Civil Assistance Project (MEDCAP) in Bargoni, Kenya.

The MEDCAP, scheduled for March 7- 8, is a part of the weeklong exercise Edged Mallet '07, involving U.S. and Kenyan militaries designed to enhance interoperability and tactical proficiency of both forces.

Bataan ESG medical and dental personnel will arrive throughout the week with supplies and expertise to treat and offer knowledge to Kenyan civilians, as well as provide practical training to Kenyan medical specialists.

"We've been provided with the necessary medicines to give care and treatment to Kenyans who have little to no medical opportunities, and leave them the chance to follow up about their ailments when we are gone," said Capt. David Wright, MEDCAP Senior Medical Officer. "No matter where you are in the world, all people have high standards of health care, just not all the resources to meet those standards. That's where we come in."

As many as 400 Kenyans per day are expected to visit the MEDCAP site before the service members return to their respective platforms. At least 10 to 15 Kenyans involved will be English-speaking and looked upon to provide translations between those in need of care and

those providing it. Care and treatment will be provided to everybody that shows up.

"We are going to be dealing with a lot of the same issues seen in sick call. Headaches, back aches, cold and flu are going to be common," said Wright.

"Everybody that can make it to us will not leave empty-handed. Either it will be recommendations and advice we give or medicine; we will do the best that we can with the resources that we have," added Wright.

The MEDCAP isn't just positive for those in need of care, but also those who provide it.

"Not only will this be a great way to foster relationships with Kenya and the U.S., but it will provide a huge amount of cultural awareness for those who have not had the opportunity to experience a third world country," said Lt. Kyle Kee, MEDCAP officer in charge.

Despite a different setting and language than most of the MEDCAP team players are familiar with, the standards will be the same.

"We won't change our standards" said Hospital Corpsman 1st Class (FMF/SW) Anthony Morris. "We will ask questions and render the same care we would for our Sailors and Marines."

Bataan, commanded by Capt. David Hulse, left her homeport of Norfolk on Jan. 4, on a regularly scheduled deployment as the flagship of the Bataan ESG, which is comprised of the Bataan Strike Group, commanded by Capt. Donna Looney, Commander Bataan Strike Group/ Amphibious Squadron (PHIBRON) 2, and the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) based out of Camp Lejeune, N.C., commanded by Col. Gregg Sturdevant.

## 'It's About Taking Care of Our Patients' Navy Medicine East's 'Top Doc' on Military Medicine

By Marsha Childs, Naval Hospital Jacksonville Marketing

**JACKSONVILLE, Fla.** - Rear Adm. Thomas R. Cullison, Commander, Navy Medicine East, and Commander, Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, was the keynote speaker at the Naval Hospital Jacksonville Leadership Course Luncheon on March 6 at the River Cove Officer's Club aboard Naval Air Station (NAS) Jacksonville, Fla. He praised Capt. Raquel Bono, Naval Hospital Jacksonville, Commanding Officer, and the staff for "doing a great job" and reported on the big picture of Navy Medicine.

Cullison singled out Cmdr. Lisa Kelty, Emergency Medicine Department Head, who served for seven months in Iraq in 2005 during high-tempo operations. He explained she was going out and doing what we do throughout the world — supporting the national interests of the U.S. in Iraq, Kuwait, Cuba and around the world.

Cullison focused on Military Medicine's contributions that are keeping people safe and healthy. The U.S. is experiencing the greatest survival rate of any war due in part to the efforts of Capt. Marlene DeMaio, an orthopedic surgeon. DeMaio organized and led a research project that measured the effectiveness of Interceptor Body

Armor (IBA), protective military Kevlar vests with ceramic plate inserts that are now in use and have saved countless lives. He also attributed our battlefield success to the dedicated and skilled Corpsmen who serve so courageously.

"Military Medicine has built a level of expertise in the Army, Navy and Air Force that just doesn't exist out there," explained Cullison. "Many years ago, a blue ribbon panel advised our leadership to train our own people if we wanted to make this work. We did just that. Today, the Graduate Medical Education programs where we train military personnel are highly competitive. Your command has done a wonderful job with education." The hospital has the Navy's largest Family Medicine Residency Training Program.

As the nation becomes more diverse, so does the Armed Forces. Cullison spoke about the Chief of Naval Operation's vision of recruitment taking into account gender and ethnic diversity. He said, "Now one-half of all medical graduates are women. We need to focus our recruiting efforts to show everyone there is a place for them in the Navy. Recruiting women out of medical school is a challenge." Cullison suggested, "If you don't have to deploy, you probably don't have to be in uniform." The future will

see the Navy getting smaller and the Marine Corps growing.

Cullison spoke about the challenges facing military medicine, including the recent revelations at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Drawing a parallel between Walter Reed and Naval Hospital Jacksonville, he said, "The real issue at Walter Reed isn't about mold on the walls in the barracks; it's about taking care of our patients."

He complimented the Naval Hospital Jacksonville staff on the great job they are doing. "When you are successful taking care of patients in Jacksonville, then I've done my job," he said.

Cullison also visited Naval Submarine Base (NSB) Kings Bay, Ga., Naval Station (NS) Mayport, Fla., in addition to NAS Jacksonville, Fla. He toured the Branch Health Clinics on each base and called on Fleet and base leadership. At NSB Kings Bay, Cullison and his wife, Marilyn, went aboard a Trident submarine.

Cullison received his Doctor of Medicine Degree in 1979 from Indiana University School of Medicine. He completed his surgical internship and orthopedic surgery residency at Naval Medical Center San Diego in 1984. He has served on active duty for more than 35 years.

## Comfort continued...

*(Continued from page 1)*

deployment is Comfort's first-ever trip to the region.

"These are people who need help. These are people who might not otherwise get the basic health care they need to realize a better tomorrow," Bush said.

During the deployment, Bush said Comfort will also partner with the Department of Health and Human Services on a new initiative to provide oral care to the region's poor. Dentists and hygienists will fill cavities and treat infections and provide treatment for the young children.

Comfort is one of two Navy hospital ships with 1,000 hospital beds and 12 operating rooms. The ship's last major deployment was to the Gulf Coast region in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005.



U.S. Navy USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) file photo.

In all, Comfort will make port calls in Belize, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.



## Essex Sailor Named Biomedical Technician of the Year

By Mass Communication Specialist  
Seaman (AW) Christian L. Lemus,  
USS Essex Public Affairs

**USS ESSEX, At Sea** - Naval Medical Logistics Command has named a USS Essex (LHD 2) Sailor the Operational Medical Equipment Repair Technician of the Year for 2006.

Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class (SW/FMF) Darren E. Bentley, biomedical equipment technician (BMET) was awarded the top honors announced Feb. 15.

Since reporting to Essex, Bentley has reduced equipment downtime by 85 percent and restored medical and dental readiness in support of inspections, routine deployments and contingency operations.

"I repair everything on the hos-

pital floor and I make sure all the maintenance is done," said Bentley. "This job is always a challenge. You have to be willing to work long hours and adapt to situations and equipment malfunctions."

BMETs are responsible for maintaining medical and patient care equipment. These technicians often work alone, and unsupervised and depend on their specialized training to help save lives.

While scheduled, preventive and corrective maintenance often consumes most of a BMETs workday, these technicians also are responsible for calibration, installation, safety testing, and the eventual salvage of all medical equipment.

The Essex biomedical technician also converts spaces to meet the medical department's demands, such as adapting and configuring

equipment to fit the small surgical rooms on board.

Bentley said he keeps equipment in top notch condition through skills he learned in school and his personal experience. Each day presents a new challenge as medical equipment varies widely. It is a never ending learning experience, explained Bentley.

Bentley is the sole biomedical repairman for the Essex Amphibious Readiness Group (ARG). He is responsible for the preventive maintenance and repair of all medical and dental equipment for the following commands: Essex, USS Harper's Ferry (LSD 49), USS Juneau (LPD 10), USS Tortuga (LSD 46), USS Patriot (MCM 7), USS Guardian (MCM 5) and USS Safeguard (ARS 50).



**MARINE CORPS AIR STATION CHERRY POINT, N.C. -** Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Nathan D. Johnson, a lab technician at Naval Hospital Cherry Point, holds up various stuffed animal "viruses" for the children of Arthur W. Edwards Elementary School in Havelock, N.C. *U.S. Marine Corps Photo by Cpl. Curt Keester*

## Little learners Tour Hospital; Get Hands-On Learning

By Cpl. Curt Keester, Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point

**MARINE CORPS AIR STATION CHERRY POINT, N.C. -**

"What is it? What is it," begged the children of Carri William's kindergarten class as Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Nathan D. Johnson held up various stuffed animal "viruses" for the children to see.

The mock viruses were used by Johnson, a lab technician at Naval Hospital Cherry Point, as learning aides during a tour of the hospital Feb. 8 for the children of Arthur W. Edwards Elementary School in Havelock, N.C.

Altogether, seven groups of kindergarten children from Arthur Edwards Elementary School toured the hospital as part of their studies in healthcare related topics in school.

The children toured several areas of the hospital including the radiology department, pediatrics and the orthopedic cast room where they learned how a cast is put on a broken arm and foot.

"I think it's kind of fun to walk around with someone who's a lot younger, who has a really open mind, and show them some of the things we do here," Johnson said. "They can learn a lot about life and keeping healthy. They also get to learn how to prevent disease, and maybe we can get some people to think about health care as a profession later in life."

Before departing the hospital, all the children gathered for a group picture behind a banner which said, "Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) Class of 2027." The USUHS is the Department of Defense school where health care workers for the Army, Navy and Air Force are trained.

The children who toured the hospital today could potentially be health care workers at Naval Hospital Cherry Point as early as 2027.

## Naval Hospital Okinawa Bests all DoD Overseas Hospitals

By Lance Cpl. Juan D. Alfonso,  
Marine Corps Base Camp Butler

**CAMP LESTER, OKINAWA, Japan** - U.S. Naval Hospital (NH) Okinawa stood out among all overseas Department of Defense hospitals in 2006, earning special recognition at the 2007 Military Health System Conference for the hospital's care of pregnant mothers and their babies.

Navy Capt. Peter F. O'Connor, the NH Okinawa commanding officer, presented his staff with the TRICARE Obstetric Care Patient Satisfaction Award Feb. 22 at the Camp Lester Chapel.

The hospital received the award for having the highest inpatient satisfaction rating for the care of women and their babies during pregnancy and about six weeks after child birth.

According to the award citation, the hospital provided excellent care by listening to patients and treating their concerns. The staff was also responsive to the physical and emotional requirements of all its patients.

"It's really good to see some recognition for the hard work our staff puts in all year," O'Connor said. "The staff worked hard to care for all the service members and families in Japan and the operating theater. With more than 100 deliveries a month, keeping the patients satisfied is a marvelous feat."

O'Connor also recognized Cmdr. Elizabeth Beazley, a family medicine physician, with the TRICARE Health Innovations Program Award.

In 2005, clinics on Camp Foster and Marine Corps Air Station Futenma stopped treating civilian patients. This change caused a decline in patient care and satisfaction.

Beazley led a team that increased patients' access to care when it opened the Lester Family Medicine Clinic.

"We gained 5,000 family members because of the unique clinical situation," Beazley said. "We analyzed the problem and developed a plan to change the clinic's settings and increase the amount of doctors, family medicine physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners

*"It's really good to see some recognition for the hard work our staff puts in all year."*

~ Captain Peter F. O'Connor, Naval Hospital Okinawa Commanding Officer

and corpsmen in the section."

As a result of the team's hard work, patient satisfaction increased by 400 percent and wait time decreased by 75 percent, according to the award citation.

"I get stopped at the commissary because people say the care at the hospital is so wonderful," O'Connor said. "We worked on this problem for over a year and a half. The patient dissatisfaction we saw then can't be seen today, and that's how it should be."

## LSS continued...

(Continued from page 2)

is not. "Lean Six Sigma does not mean getting rid of people and jobs, but rather to reallocate the necessary resources to places where they are needed to get a quality product out.

"There's so many changes going on now in Naval Medicine in terms of impending downsizes. Lean Six Sigma is a critical management tool that all of us are going to use basically to enable us to sustain key performances in the face of these changes and challenges," said Cmdr. Stewart Comer, MC, Director Ancillary Services, Naval Medical Center, San Diego, Calif. and a Black Belt candidate student. "That means that every medical treatment facility (MTF) has to operate

the same way, which is so crucial because everyone is part of this overall organization of Naval Medicine. We need to be tied together with one common management practice, which we are not now."

Lean Six Sigma and Naval Medicine is not just a 'today' initiative; those come and go. Comer looks to the future benefits to be enjoyed by this new business practice.

"We have got to be able to link strategic initiatives to the ultimate performance at the deck plate level and that's what Lean Six Sigma is really going to offer us. No one has that now. Everyone uniformly is able to perform their day to day operations using the same methodologies and link their strategic initiatives to the Bureau of Medicine."



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